

October 3, 2014

Mr. Patrick Finnerty
Facilitator, SB627 Workgroup
C/O DBHDS
Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services
P.O. Box 1797
Richmond, VA 23218-1797

Dear Mr. Finnerty,

We, the undersigned members of the SB627 workgroup, are writing to express our deep and serious concerns about the process that took place at the September 5 meeting.

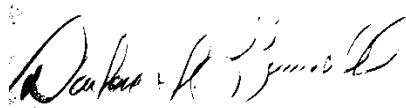
When we were asked to participate on this workgroup, we agreed to do so with the understanding that our voices would be heard and community-based alternatives would be considered. We expected community families to be treated with the same respect that is afforded to other members of the workgroup. To our disappointment, we have instead experienced inequitable treatment, the consistent silencing of our voices and elimination of any options we could support without a clear and fair process.

Throughout the meeting, community families on the workgroup felt ignored and dismissed. Waiting list families who observed proceedings from the audience echoed these sentiments and reported feeling "devalued" as a result of the discussion. When the conversation about options took place, the only perspective that was allowed to be heard was the one that favored expansion of institutions.

The scope of work drastically changed from the first two meetings to a more narrowly defined focus of the workgroup. We are strongly opposed to the overly restrictive interpretation of the workgroup charge that was adopted at the last meeting. Despite the fact that several workgroup members felt this way, options that strengthen community-based services were still eliminated from the discussion. As a result, many community options openly discussed at previous meetings were suddenly taken off the table.

We strongly believe that the perspectives of community families should be heard and respected in the workgroup. The discussion should represent the full range of options open to the General Assembly, including zeroing out the training center census in accordance with an accelerated schedule. We will continue to participate, but we sincerely hope our voices will be heard in the future.

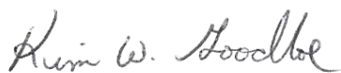
Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Darlene Gunnell". The script is cursive and somewhat stylized.

Darlene Gunnell

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nichole M. Pangle". The script is cursive and somewhat stylized.

Nichole M. Pangle

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kim W. Goodloe". The script is cursive and somewhat stylized.

Kim Goodloe

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bradford Hulcher". The script is cursive and somewhat stylized.

Bradford Hulcher

CC:

Debra Ferguson, Commissioner, DBHDS
Members of the 627 Workgroup